



How to research your landlord

“How to research your landlord and why you should”

<http://keepyourrenthamilton.com/resources/how-to-research-your-landlord/>

By Keep Your Rent Hamilton (April 2020)

Thanks to fellow tenants from other cities and towns in Ontario who took the time to provide feedback on this post.

WHY RESEARCH YOUR LANDLORD?

There is an information imbalance and a power imbalance between landlords and tenants. As the rental market has tightened over the past several years, landlords have started to demand more and more information through tenant screening processes. My landlord knows where I live, my phone number, email address, banking information, social insurance number, credit report results, where I work, my income level, if I receive social assistance, how many people are in my household, if I have a pet, if I smoke, etc. But what do I know about my landlord? Next to nothing.

Many small landlords hire property management companies to conduct all of the face-to-face business with their tenants. Corporate landlords and real estate investment trusts (REITs) are owned by investors from anywhere in the world. They know nothing of the day-to-day operations of the company and will never interact with their tenants. They are happy to monitor their bank accounts from afar and see a return on their investments, without knowing any of the details of how it happened or from whose pockets that money came from.

Landlords and real estate investors prefer to remain anonymous and maintain distance from their tenants. They would rather not get into the dirty work of doing repairs, treating

pests, collecting rent, or evicting people who fall behind. Instead, they have middle-men who do these things on their behalf: property managers, superintendents, investment fund managers and accountants, lawyers, paralegals, Landlord and Tenant Board adjudicators, sheriffs, etc.

Landlords often like to call themselves “housing providers” or “shelter providers,” but they are not offering homes for free or at non-profit rates. Renting houses is a business and landlords want to make profits. Landlords know they can make more money if they can find ways to cut costs and increase revenue. This is at the core of the business model. But this is often to the detriment of their tenants. For example, by cutting corners on doing repairs properly or by evicting a longstanding, rent-controlled tenant to bring in a new tenant at twice the rent.

A landlord wants to remain anonymous because he knows that renting homes often involves some icky situations. He doesn't want to be known publicly as the guy who claimed it was too expensive to fix the laundry machine, forcing elderly tenants to lug their clothes through ice and snow to the laundromat. He doesn't want to be known publicly as the guy who claimed “my son needs to move into this apartment” in order to evict a single mom and her kids and bring in a higher-paying tenant. And the landlord who invests via a real estate investment company doesn't want to be known publicly as the guy who [evicted new immigrant families en masse to tear down their homes and build condos](#). Ultimately, landlords don't want to be reminded of the fact that they make money off of somebody else's home. That's too personal.

By doing research, we make it personal. Finding out more about our landlords can inform and direct our organizing. By doing our research, we can choose the best tactics to apply pressure where it's most effective. As always, it's a good idea to discuss and plan things out with your tenant committee. What are your shared concerns? And what is the most effective way to get these things resolved? A good first step is to outline your concerns in a letter from the tenant committee to your landlord. If there is no response, or an unsatisfactory response, then progress to a petition or collective work order delivery. If this doesn't work, then you might progress to shaming the landlord in the media. If this doesn't work, then you might progress to picketing at his workplace. It's good to do your research, be prepared, and have a plan of escalating actions in mind, but you don't want to go from 0 to 100 immediately. Give your landlord a chance to do the right thing. ***Note: During the COVID-19 crisis, if landlords neglect their obligations to do maintenance and repairs, or begin harassing tenants, you will need to skip some of these steps and escalate more quickly.***

There is no one-size-fits-all way of researching your landlord, but here are some tips and resources that can help. Happy hunting!

RESEARCHING SMALL LANDLORDS

If your landlord is an individual who owns a small number of investment properties, your research will be mainly limited to finding out information about his personal life.

In this case, a basic first step will be to do a Google search on his name. In this case you are looking for personal information, such as the addresses of where your landlord lives and works.

Sometimes small landlords are small business owners, lawyers, or other types of professionals. Even with COVID-19 related precautions in place, there are many ways tenants can put pressure on landlords by targeting their home or business operations.

Social media sites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. can often be useful sources of information. A surprising number of people do not make their social media profiles private, so you can see their history of posts. This often paints a picture of your landlord's interests, politics, beliefs, and general character as a person. Take screen captures of any noteworthy posts, in addition to any of your personal correspondences. You might be able to use this against your landlord in the future.

Some landlords consider themselves community leaders, philanthropists, or champions of this-or-that social cause. Through a Google search, you might find that your landlord sits on the school board, sponsors a kids' soccer team, holds golf tournament fundraisers for women's shelters, gets praise in the media for donating food bank hampers at Christmas, etc. This suggests your landlord has a conscience and cares about how he is perceived in the community. It's worth calling him on his bullshit publicly. If you care about children's wellbeing, why are you neglecting to pay for bed bug treatment and allowing these children to become covered in bites? If you care about food insecurity, why are you raising the rent and forcing your low-income tenants to choose between food and rent? If you care about women's housing stability, why are you evicting this elderly lady who fell behind on rent? You can contact the charities your landlord has worked with in the past, explain your situation, and ask them not to partner with him in the future if he does not correct his behaviour. He doesn't deserve public praise if he is a bully and a hypocrite in private.

Also consider: Researching other properties your landlord owns

If your small landlord owns several houses across the city, you should try to find the addresses of the other properties and reach out to the tenants who live there. If your landlord is neglecting repairs at your building, chances are he is treating tenants in other buildings the same way. You will be more powerful if you work together to apply pressure. To find the list of properties, follow the steps under 'Resources for Digging Deeper' below.

RESEARCHING LARGE LANDLORDS

If your building is owned by a large corporation or a real estate investment trust (REIT), or managed by a large property management company, your first step will be to do an internet search and read through the company's website. Here you will often find the names of partners, executives, and other high-ranking employees within the company's corporate structure — and often their professional contact information. You can then run these names through search engines to try to find out additional information about some of the people who are making the decisions at the head office, or the closest regional satellite office.

REITs are large financial institutions designed to manage a broad portfolio of real estate properties as an investment for shareholders. They often post annual shareholder reports on their websites. These reports may outline their future plans for your building, and other properties owned by the REIT, as they seek to explain to shareholders how they plan to increase their return on investments. (Spoiler...it's by charging us more rent!)

Property management companies may or may not own the buildings they manage. If they don't own the building, it can be useful to find out who does, and figure out ways to put pressure on them. Landlords employ property management companies so that they don't have to deal with their tenants themselves. Raising your demands with the landlord directly is a good way of bypassing the middleman and forcing the property management company to meet your demands.


RESOURCES FOR DIGGING DEEPER

Some of the following searches cost money, unfortunately. Consider pooling cash from members of your tenant committee to share the burden.

Land Registry Office / OnLand.ca: Searching by Property Address

The Land Registry Office (LRO) provides access to land ownership records for a fee, which is usually around \$35. You can visit the Land Registry Office Hamilton-Wentworth branch, located on the 4th floor of the Ellen Fairclough building (119 King Street West), and use the computers there. [Here](#) is the full list of LRO locations across Ontario for tenants outside Hamilton. As of March 24, 2020, land registry offices across Ontario are considered 'essential services' and still open, despite COVID-19. But if possible, avoid this and search online from your own computer. You can search the LRO database online [here](#). If outside of Hamilton, be sure to select a different LRO from the list provided. You can search the address of your building and it will come up with a parcel register that lists the name of the owner, and often other information such as any mortgages they have on the property. This is useful if you're not sure who owns your building.

Here is a sample parcel register:



PARCEL REGISTER (ABBREVIATED) FOR PROPERTY IDENTIFIER

LAND REGISTRY OFFICE #33

08061-0013 (LT)

* CERTIFIED BY LAND REGISTRAR IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAND TITLES ACT * SUBJECT TO RESERVATIONS IN CROWN GRANT *

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PREPARED FOR MIKE

ON 2010/11/11 AT 15:38:38

teranet e/press

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION: PART LOT 23, PLAN 784, AS IN 307317 LONDON/LONDON TOWNSHIP

PROPERTY REMARKS:

ESTATE/QUALIFIER:	RECENTLY:	PIN CREATION DATE:
FEE SIMPLE	FIRST CONVERSION FROM BOOK 451	1989/12/11
L/T CONVERSION QUALIFIED		

OWNERS' NAMES	CAPACITY SHARE	
LEE, JOHN	TCOM 50.0%	
BERGER, JELENA	TCOM 50.0%	

REG. NUM.	DATE	INSTRUMENT TYPE	AMOUNT	PARTIES FROM	PARTIES TO	CERT/CHKD
<p>**EFFECTIVE 2000/07/29 THE NOTATION OF THE "BLOCK IMPLEMENTATION DATE" OF 1989/12/11 ON THIS PIN**</p> <p>**WAS REPLACED WITH THE "PIN CREATION DATE" OF 1989/12/11**</p> <p>** PRINTOUT INCLUDES ALL DOCUMENT TYPES (DELETED INSTRUMENTS NOT INCLUDED) **</p> <p>**SUBJECT, ON FIRST REGISTRATION UNDER THE LAND TITLES ACT, TO:</p> <p>**</p> <p>SUBSECTION 44(1) OF THE LAND TITLES ACT, EXCEPT PARAGRAPH 11, PARAGRAPH 14, PROVINCIAL SUCCESSION DUTIES * AND ESCHEATS OR FORFEITURE TO THE CROWN.</p> <p>**</p> <p>THE RIGHTS OF ANY PERSON WHO WOULD, BUT FOR THE LAND TITLES ACT, BE ENTITLED TO THE LAND OR ANY PART OF IT THROUGH LENGTH OF ADVERSE POSSESSION, PRESCRIPTION, MISDESCRIPTION OR BOUNDARIES SETTLED BY CONVENTION.</p> <p>**</p> <p>ANY LEASE TO WHICH THE SUBSECTION 70(2) OF THE REGISTRY ACT APPLIES.</p> <p>**DATE OF CONVERSION TO LAND TITLES: 1989/12/11 **</p>						
LY68895	1954/10/12	BYLAW				C
118887	1959/04/09	BYLAW				C
CORRECTIONS: 'THIS INSTRUMENT' WAS DELETED FROM PROPERTY 08072-0175 IN ERROR AND WAS RE-INSTATED ON 1992/03/17 BY BRUCE BURT.						
LT442253	1996/10/08	CHARGE	\$27,000	JENNINGS, BARBARA JENNINGS, KENNETH	CANADA TRUSTCO MORTGAGE COMPANY	C
GSREG2	1998/04/23	NOTICE		ABC		C
TT43119	2003/12/10	TRANSFER	\$125,000	JENNINGS, BARBARA JENNINGS, KENNETH	LEE, JOHN BERGER, JELENA	C

NOTE: ADJOINING PROPERTIES SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED TO ASCERTAIN DESCRIPTIVE INCONSISTENCIES, IF ANY, WITH DESCRIPTION REPRESENTED FOR THIS PROPERTY.
NOTE: ENSURE THAT YOUR PRINTOUT STATES THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PAGES AND THAT YOU HAVE PICKED THEM ALL UP.

Teranet: Searching by Property Owner's Name

Once you know the name of the owner of the property, you can go to the [Teranet website](#), create a free account, and search by name to see if your landlord owns any other properties in the city. Keep in mind that the same landlord may register different properties under his name, his wife's name, his son's name, etc. so you may need to run multiple searches. It costs \$10 to purchase one 'search name report' (you can ask for up to 20 individuals with the same last name to be included in the one report) and the results are sent to you right away by email. [Here](#) are more detailed step-by-step instructions.

Service Ontario: Searching Numbered Companies

Sometimes, in order to hide their personal information, landlords will register a shell corporation as the legal owner of the property. Service Ontario is the first step for getting more information on the corporation that owns your building, provided that it is registered in Ontario. Call them at 1-800-267-8097. The first bit of information you will need is the Ontario Corporation Number (OCN), which they will provide you over the phone if you have the name of the corporation. Once you have the OCN, you can either request a full corporate profile through Service Ontario by mail or in person (the closest available office is in Toronto), or you can use a third-party service, which will usually email you the information in a matter of a couple of hours. The fees for this information range from \$12 if you go through Service Ontario, to around \$25-30 if you use a third-party service. The corporate profile will provide you with the names and addresses of

the corporation's chief officers. Often, this will give you the name and home address of your landlord, or of a high-ranking executive at the corporation that owns your building.

Service Ontario: Finding Names of Business Owners through Enhanced Business Name Searches

It's safe to say most tenants are not business school majors. It's very difficult to try and figure out how companies are structured or what the difference is between an unincorporated or incorporated business. So there's a chance this search doesn't turn up anything useful, but there's also a chance it can provide details about your landlord's company owners, including addresses. For \$8, you can do an Enhanced Business Name Search (EBNS) through the government of Ontario's website [here](#). The EBNS will only search for unincorporated businesses in Ontario. Unincorporated businesses are usually sole proprietor or partnership companies. You can do this search online from home, but only from Monday to Friday 8:30 AM to 6:00 PM.

Here is a sample Enhanced Business Name Search report:

Request ID:	022017936	Province of Ontario	Date Report Produced:	2018/08/17
Transaction ID:	09041808	Ministry of Government Services	Time Report Produced:	14:23:54
Category ID:	LINE		Page:	1

BUSINESS NAMES REPORT

Business name registered under the <i>Business Names Act</i> D.D. ACQUISITIONS PARTNERSHIP	Business Identification Number 111310728
	Business Type GENERAL PARTNERSHIP
<hr/>	<hr/>
Mailing Address 3280 BLOOR STREET WEST No. 1400 TORONTO ONTARIO CANADA, MBX 2X3	Address of Principal Place of Business in Ontario 3280 BLOOR STREET WEST No. 1400 TORONTO ONTARIO CANADA, MBX 2X3
Activity being carried out REAL ESTATE SERVICES	
Registration Date 2001/12/21	Expiry Date 2021/12/17
Renewal Date 2016/11/29	Amendment Date(s) 2016/01/11 2014/10/17 2014/05/22
Last Document Filed RENEWAL	Cancellation Date NOT APPLICABLE
Last Document Filed Date 2016/11/29	
More than 10 Partners: records at business address NO	Current Partnership Business Names Exist: NO
	Expired Partnership Business Names Exist: NO

City Hall: Searching Property Values & Tax Information

Go online to the City of Hamilton website and use [the property inquiry tool](#) to search the City's property tax database. For free, you can look up any address in the city and get the current property value of the building and the annual taxes paid on the property by your landlord. If you don't have a computer or access to the internet, you can call the City Clerk's office for the same information at 905-546-2489. Other municipalities in Ontario will have similar information on their websites.

TAKE ACTION

Here are some examples of actions you and your fellow tenants could take to put pressure on your landlord, using the information you find. Get creative! There are probably many other ideas we haven't thought of.

Phone / Email Zap

If you have your landlord's work phone number or email address or his personal phone number or email address, you can use this to do a phone/email zap. Pick a date for the zap and advertise it in advance. Get as many tenants and supporters (family, friends, social media followers) to commit to call/email your landlord on that date. Write a short script so people know what to say, explaining that you are calling in support of tenants from X building and tenants' demands for X issue to be addressed. The point is to flood the landlord's phone/email with messages and interrupt his business operations by jamming up his phone line.

COVID-19 considerations:

This is a COVID-19 safe action! In fact, lots of your friends may be home with time to kill and can call and email many times.

Sample action:

Phone zap / email zap on May 1, 2018 organized by the Hamilton Tenants Solidarity Network in support of Stoney Creek Towers tenants during the East Hamilton Rent Strike.

The screenshot shows a Facebook event post from the Hamilton Tenants Solidarity Network (@HamiltonTenants). The event is titled 'East Hamilton Rent Strike Phone Zap' and is scheduled for Monday, September 24, from 9 AM to 8 PM. The post includes a suggested script and a list of contact information for CLV Group and InterRent staff. A photo of a man, Oliver Filip, is also visible.

Hamilton Tenants Solidarity Network
@HamiltonTenants

Call CLV Group / InterRent REIT staff TODAY (MON SEP 24, 9AM-8PM) to tell them what you think of landlords that break the law and bully tenants. Jam up their phone lines and ruin their day!

Suggested script here: facebook.com/events/5645802...

#HamOnt #EastHamiltonRentStrike #CLVGroup

PHONE ZAP!
TODAY 9AM-8PM

Oliver Filip
Hamilton Property Manager (CLV Group)
905-299-1987

Martin Vervoort
Chief Legal Counsel (CLV Group)
613-804-0607

David Nevins
Chief Operating Officer (CLV Group / InterRent REIT)
613-722-8004 ext. 242

TELL THEM WHAT YOU THINK OF LANDLORDS THAT BREAK THE LAW & BULLY TENANTS

10:39 AM · Sep 24, 2018 · Twitter Web Client



The screenshot shows the Facebook event page for 'East Hamilton Rent Strike Phone Zap'. The event is scheduled for May 1st and is hosted by the Hamilton Tenants Solidarity Network. The page includes a 'Going' button, a 'Details' section, and a 'SUGGESTED SCRIPT' section. The script is a call to action for tenants to support the rent strike by calling InterRent and demanding a drop in rent and necessary repairs. A list of contact information for CLV/InterRent staff is also provided.

EAST HAMILTON RENT STRIKE PHONE ZAP

MAY 1 East Hamilton Rent Strike Phone Zap
Public · Hosted by Hamilton Tenants Solidarity Network

✓ Going ▾

Details

Call InterRent to support tenants in east Hamilton, Ontario who are on rent strike beginning May 1st. Demand that InterRent drop the rent increase and make necessary repairs to all units.

SUGGESTED SCRIPT

"My name is _____ and I am calling to support the Stoney Creek Towers rent strike. Drop the above guideline rent increase and make all of the necessary repairs to tenants' units. CLV and InterRent are pushing low-income tenants out of their homes and you need to stop."

FLOOD THEIR PHONE LINES!

- Mike McGahan, CEO of CLV/InterRent: 613-569-5699 Ext 244 - mmcgahan@interrentreit.com
- Roseanne Holtman, CLV Director of Community Relations: 613-604-0618 - roseanne.holtman@clvgroup.com
- CLV Head office: 613-728-2000
- InterRent Investor Relations: 613-569-5699
- Oliver Filip, regional property manager: 905-299-1987

March on Landlord's Home or Business

Visit your landlord's home or place of business as a group. Deliver a letter on behalf of the tenant committee. Deliver a stack of work orders requesting repairs. Be sure to read the letter out loud or make a speech about the repair issues, forcing your landlord (and any coworkers or customers nearby) to listen to you. You could also picket your landlord's business, giving out flyers to customers entering or exiting. The flyer should explain why you are upset with your landlord and why customers should not give their business to someone who treats his tenants badly.

COVID-19 considerations:

You will need to adapt this action to avoid gathering in a large crowd. You could have people march in a line holding signs (keeping a two metre distance) in front of your landlord's home or business. You could have a convoy of cars driving by your landlord's house or business with signs, banners, and noise makers.

Sample action:

Members of the Los Angeles Tenants Union stage a march and convoy action outside the LA mayor's house on April 1, 2020, demanding a rent suspension and eviction suspension during the COVID-19 crisis.



Public Shaming In Landlord's Neighbourhood

Put up posters in your landlord's neighbourhood or put flyers in his neighbours' mailboxes, explaining who your landlord is and why you are upset with him. Your landlord may not care about what his tenants think of him, but he probably cares a lot about what his rich neighbours think about him and will want to protect his reputation.

COVID-19 considerations:

Putting up posters is a safe action. Putting flyers in mailboxes is also possible, but you should take extra hygiene precautions. Read more on the Tips for Organizers page [here](#).

Sample action:

This action was organized by members of Parkdale Organize in support of Parkdale families. Michael Lax is the owner of Nuspor Investments, a company imposing Above Guideline rent Increases (AGIs) and refusing to make repairs in a Parkdale rental building where many low-income families live. Copies of this flyer were delivered in February 2018 to Michael and Marsha Lax's neighbours in their wealthy Bathurst and Sheppard-area neighbourhood in Toronto. Flyers were also delivered in the area of Bnei Akiva school where Micahel Lax sits on the Board of Directors.

**Do you know who runs
your kid's school?**

Michael & Marsha Lax

THREATEN PARKDALE FAMILIES



Michael Lax, member of the Board of Directors of the Bnei Akiva Schools, will tell you that he cares about kids, but he is also the owner of Nuspor Investments, a company that is currently forcing families with young children out of their homes in the middle of winter. The tenants of 1251 King Street West are fighting for their homes. Their kids' elementary school teachers have taken to the streets to call on Michael Lax to stop his attack on low-income families. We won't stand by while Michael Lax forces our children out into the cold. From our families to yours, call on Michael Lax to withdraw his rent increase of more than twice the legal guideline and to stop evicting Parkdale kids.

647-874-8793

PARKDALEORGANIZE@GMAIL.COM